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Securing the future by remembering the past, Part 2.

Psalm 78

(Preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, Lord's Day morning, 3rd July 2016.)

In the first part of this message, preached three weeks ago, we sought to highlight how sinful it is to forget the mercy that the Lord has displayed toward us in His past dealings with us.

The main point I made then was:

I. THE TERRIBLE SIN OF FORGETTING THE LORD.

When we think of God's kindness as set forth in verses such as:

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 5:8, and again: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John 4:10; then forgetfulness of God's mercy is surely the greatest act of ingratitude that could ever be committed!

Yet, how common it is as seen in the history of God's people and, sadly, in the attitudes amongst God's people today.

We have forgotten the Lord's goodness to us. "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee," Deuteronomy 32:18. Are our minds filled with the Lord and His kindness or are we rather inclined to "mind earthly things"?

We need to consider the words of the Saviour. "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you," Luke 12:29-31.

Think of the parable of the sower. "And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful," Mark 4:18-19.

Such worldly-mindedness is what hinders the conversion of the sinner and it can also stop the progress of the saint and lies at the heart of backsliding!

We take up the message again and wish you to observe that:

II. THE CHIEF EVIDENCE OF THIS SIN IS SEEN IN OUR HOMES.

The word 'hide', verse 4, means to 'conceal, to cut off', Exodus 9:15. What God did to Pharaoh, this we do to our children when we 'cut off' God's truth from them.

1. Consider just what is the duty of fathers. This refers to natural fathers as well as the 'fathers' of the church, the elders. "Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done," verse 4. You must be well acquainted with such 'wonderful works' before you can teach them to your children.

2. The methods of passing on the truth of God. The word 'shewing' means to 'recount, relate'. Simply, to tell what God has done. Such telling is to be an integral part of the atmosphere in our homes. Specific instructions are given on how it is done, Deuteronomy 6:6-9. "Teach", "talk", keep them before your eyes and our hands, make them a feature of your home. Live them out before your family.

3. This is a command of God. Verse 5. "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in



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Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children." It is as binding as the Law

4. Failure on the part of fathers leads on to utter ruin. Disaster can come in one generation! Consider the use of the word 'hide' in Exodus 23:23. Here it is translated 'off'. To hide these truths from our children is to destroy them!!

III. A PROPER RECOUNTING OF GOD'S MERCY BY US WILL ENCOURAGE OUR CHILDREN TO SET THEIR HOPE IN GOD.

It is the chief means of evangelism. How much does this failure explain today's departure amongst young people?

1. Keeping God's commandments is the evidence of a child rightly remembering the Lord. Instruction that does not produce obedience and holiness is of little value. If our children do not trust the Lord, is it because we failed to testify rightly of His mercy and greatness? A solemn question indeed!!

2. If our children have forgotten God, and take a step further on the road to perdition, do we not bear some blame? Children will be held responsible but mothers and fathers will also have a sense of failure as they watch their children go down to ruin. "Where did I go wrong?" they will surely ask. Yet, the Lord is merciful. Psalm 51:13-14. Here is a man conscious of his failures as a parent and the dangers in which he has placed his children by his backslidings and failure.

3. Those children who do remember the Lord will gain courage by such memories. "If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt," Deuteronomy 7:17-18.

Here is the cure for fear when facing the power of the enemy.

Now you cannot remember what you have never experienced or never been taught! We rob our children of a right defence, we paralyse our children, if we fail in this duty.

What hope is there for the church if our children face the future without a right understanding of the power and majesty of God?

A word to the younger generation: If, after being taught the greatness of God, there is a forgetting, then how much greater will be the judgment that follows!

"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves," Judges 3:7.

"And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them," 1 Samuel 12:9.

Here is the terrible downward path to which forgetting God and His mercy consigns the future generations.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them," Romans 1:28-32.